

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for assigning a work item for one of a plurality of nodes in a
2 workflow to at least one of a plurality of users capable of performing workflow related
3 operations at the nodes, comprising:
4 processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is
5 associated with the processed node;
6 determining users capable of being assigned the current work item;
7 for each determined user, determining a number of work items other than the
8 current work item assigned to the user;
9 selecting at least one determined user based on the determined number of work
10 items assigned to the determined users; and
11 assigning the current work item to the at least one determined user.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the determined number of work items
2 assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in workflows other
3 than the current workflow.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the determined number of work items
2 further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow other than
3 the current work item.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the determined users comprise users on an
2 access list associated with the current workflow.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the number of work items
2 assigned to each user further comprises:
3 determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and

4 determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated
5 with an access list that includes the user.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein selecting at least one determined user
2 based on the determined number of work items assigned to the determined users further
3 comprises:
4 for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work
5 item;
6 for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work
7 item assigned to the user; and
8 using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the priority related to the work item
2 comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is included.

1 8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the priority
3 related to the work item.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the user defined priority is for the
2 workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

1 10. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user defined
3 priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and
4 determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein the
5 determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the
6 normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

1 11. The method of claim 6, wherein the selected user comprises the user
2 having a lowest index value.

1 12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
2 if no one user has the lowest index value, determining from the users having a
3 same lowest index value one user having a least number of assigned work items, wherein
4 the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises the
5 selected one user.

1 13. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using the user
3 indexes.

1 14. The method of claim 6, further comprising:
2 using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the new work
3 item.

1 15. A system method for assigning a work item in a workflow, comprising:
2 a storage device;
3 a database in the storage device, wherein the database includes a plurality of
4 workflows, wherein each workflow includes a plurality of nodes and work items, wherein
5 during execution of the workflow, the work items for the nodes are assigned to users
6 capable of performing workflow related operations at the nodes, comprising:
7 means for processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is
8 associated with the processed node;
9 means for determining users capable of being assigned the current work item;
10 means for determining, for each determined user, a number of work items other
11 than the current work item assigned to the user;

12 means for selecting at least one determined user based on the determined number
13 of work items assigned to the determined users; and
14 means for assigning the current work item to the at least one determined user.

1 16. The system of claim 15, wherein the determined number of work items
2 assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in workflows other
3 than the current workflow.

1 17. The system of claim 16, wherein the determined number of work items
2 further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow other than
3 the current work item.

1 18. The system of claim 15, wherein the determined users comprise users on
2 an access list associated with the current workflow.

1 19. The system of claim 15, wherein the means for determining the number of
2 work items assigned to each user further performs:
3 determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and
4 determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated
5 with an access list that includes the user.

1 20. The system of claim 15, wherein the means for selecting at least one
2 determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the
3 determined users further performs:
4 for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work
5 item;
6 for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work
7 item assigned to the user; and

8 using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

1 21. The system of claim 20, wherein the priority related to the work item
2 comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is included.

1 22. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
2 means for receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the
3 priority related to the work item.

1 23. The system of claim 22, wherein the user defined priority is for the
2 workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

1 24. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
2 means for receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user
3 defined priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and
4 means for determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein
5 the determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the
6 normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

1 25. The system of claim 20, wherein the means for selecting the user selects
2 the user having a lowest index value.

1 26. The system of claim 25, further comprising:
2 means for determining, if no one user has the lowest index value, one user having
3 a least number of assigned work items from the users having a same lowest index value,
4 wherein the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises
5 the selected one user.

1 27. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
2 means for using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using
3 the user indexes.

1 28. The system of claim 20, further comprising:
2 means for using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the
3 new work item.

1 29. An article of manufacture including code for assigning a work item for one
2 of a plurality of nodes in a workflow to at least one of a plurality of users capable of
3 performing workflow related operations at the nodes by:
4 processing a node in a current workflow, wherein a current work item is
5 associated with the processed node;
6 determining users capable of being assigned the current work item;
7 for each determined user, determining a number of work items other than the
8 current work item assigned to the user;
9 selecting at least one determined user based on the determined number of work
10 items assigned to the determined users; and
11 assigning the current work item to the at least one determined user.

1 30. The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein the determined number of
2 work items assigned to each user includes active work items assigned to the user in
3 workflows other than the current workflow.

1 31. The article of manufacture of claim 30, wherein the determined number of
2 work items further include active work items assigned to the user in the current workflow
3 other than the current work item.

1 32. The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein the determined users
2 comprise users on an access list associated with the current workflow.

1 33. The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein determining the number
2 of work items assigned to each user further comprises:
3 determining work items for which the user has exclusive access; and
4 determining work items that are not owned by another user and that are associated
5 with an access list that includes the user.

1 34. The article of manufacture of claim 29, wherein selecting at least one
2 determined user based on the determined number of work items assigned to the
3 determined users further comprises:
4 for each work item assigned to the user, determining a priority related to the work
5 item;
6 for each user, calculating an index based on each priority related to each work
7 item assigned to the user; and
8 using the index to select one user to assign the new work item.

1 35. The article of manufacture of claim 34, wherein the priority related to the
2 work item comprises a priority assigned to the workflow in which the work item is
3 included.

1 36. The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:
2 receiving a user defined priority, wherein the user defined priority is the priority
3 related to the work item.

1 37. The article of manufacture of claim 36, wherein the user defined priority is
2 for the workflow including the work item assigned to the user.

1 38. The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:
2 receiving a user defined priority scheme associating a plurality of user defined
3 priorities with a plurality of normalized ratings; and
4 determining a user defined priority related to the work item, wherein the
5 determined priority related to the work item used to calculate the index comprises the
6 normalized rating associated with the user defined priority.

1 39. The article of manufacture of claim 34, wherein the selected user
2 comprises the user having a lowest index value.

1 40. The article of manufacture of claim 39, further comprising:
2 if no one user has the lowest index value, determining from the users having a
3 same lowest index value one user having a least number of assigned work items, wherein
4 the determined user having the least number of assigned work items comprises the
5 selected one user.

1 41. The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:
2 using an arbitrary criteria to select one user if no user is selected using the user
3 indexes.

1 42. The article of manufacture of claim 34, further comprising:
2 using the index to determine at least one additional user to assign the new work
3 item.